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The virginity of the single woman is becoming very rare in La Guajira. Premarital relations have been occurring with greater frequency in recent years as a consequence of the social disintegration of this indigeneous group, caused by a multiplicity of reasons, among which stand out: the influence of the so-called white groups, among whom free union is common practice; emigration to regions such as Venezuela, where the Indian women break away from the norms of their ancestors and find an atmosphere which does not resent the sexual adventures of women but rather stimulates them; the scarcity and hunger in certain regions which push the inhabitants toward the urban centers of the peninsula, where the woman gives herself in exchange for the wherewithal to satisfy her vital needs of food and dress, an attitude which her relatives recognize and tolerate because, indirectly, it also helps them. The premarital relations forced by circumstances or encouraged by them have been creating a social class of women which previously did not exist nor could fit within her social organization: the prostitute. It must be noted that it is the mestizo woman (mixture of Indian with white or negro) who more easily takes this road.

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Also one has to take into account the premature premarital relations that have always existed in La Guajira and which take place between the girls and their brothers, and even their fathers, when the girls are about ten or more, when they go to the fields or the countryside in general and meet the boys who are devoting themselves to pasturing. (Cf. Chap. II.)

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The common type of furtive sexual relations of the adult woman causes her to drop in social esteem and particularly in that of the men, producing, indirectly, the phenomenon that virginity as a basis for marriage has become overvalued. Before, it was a fact that was logically expected as an essential, and the lack of this condition created social and psychic problems.

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836 Today this causes less repercussion, and the phenomena which were  
558 aroused in the society and the individual have become weakened.  
178 But by contrast, it /virginity/ is an object of greater search, and  
the man who is successful /70/ in finding a virgin bride publicizes  
it as an individual reason for prestige. Furthermore, men are  
complaining less and less when their wives have not come as  
virgins to the nuptial hammock, and they only make it the subject  
of satirical songs when they are drunk. That is to say, they take  
the matter more broadmindedly, giving it the character of an  
accomplished fact and almost to be expected.

684 Violation and rape. The payment for abuse is that which the  
Guajiro must pay for illicit sexual relations with an unmarried  
woman, being a material compensation for the improper use made  
of her and returning to the woman her position of respected spinster,  
with the possibility that another man will court her and buy her  
for himself, without the fact of the abuse weighing as a dishonor  
in her past or having any echo in the future. It is also the com-  
pensation to the maternal relatives of the woman for the material  
and moral offense of violation of a right. They receive this pay-  
ment because, by not accepting it, they would lower their kins-  
woman, and through her all of the family, to the category of "a  
dog or a burro," with no one to make their rights valid, and in  
order to prevent others wishing to do the same thing to other  
women of the family, which would bring the prestige of the group  
to an end. Also, because the man made use of a right which he  
should have paid for beforehand, to compensate the woman's  
relatives for rearing her and for the social support they have given  
her. The payment covers two distinct aspects of different value:  
violation and rape.

684 In the first case, as it is considered that the woman has shown  
839 willingness in the act, only the abuse is taken into account. In  
the second, as force has been used, a compensation payment is  
demanded not only for abuse but for violation, specifying that the  
man used force and thereby humiliated the woman, made her  
dishonor and her physical weakness more obvious, and offended

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[558] relation to domestic work. We have to bear in mind that this traditional separation is strictly complied with, because anyone doing the customary work of the opposite sex loses personal value. And in order not to be seen as an object of ridicule to others, Guajiro men and women try to avoid carrying out any function identified with the opposite sex, even as a diversion, as in the case of children, who may not play games of make-believe other than those ascribed to their sex.

All work related to the care and nomadic pasturing of various classes of livestock is traditionally masculine work. Each Guajiro who owns livestock or who has them en cuido / lit., "in his care" / (an exchange which means he has a herd from another Indian in order to pasture it in exchange for which he receives payment) gets up at daybreak with his nephews or sons and drives the livestock in search of pasture. During the day he guards them closely to prevent them from being stolen by men or harmed by carnivorous animals. At nightfall he waters the herd at the wells / casimbas or jagtleys / and then shuts them in the corrals of the house, after checking that all are there. Combined with these activities there are, for example, the treatment of sick animals, their branding, helping the shaman who treats by magic animals attacked by pests, breaking in the young colts for pack or saddle horses, making all necessary harness from saddles to reins and straps with their diverse variations and, finally, the slaughter of animals with the exception of domestic poultry.

Another traditional male activity is hunting. From childhood the Guajiro practice hunting small birds and animals, which is also a preparatory exercise for war, an employment which requires mastery in the use of firearms. Neither women nor children are allowed to participate in hunting expeditions.

Connected with the activity of hunting are fabrication of weapons, which comprises making bows and arrows, head guards, and various magic charms to make the hunt easy and productive; making and placing traps used to protect the sown fields from harmful animals or as a means of collecting edible animals.

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554 His functions keep on being carried out by means of inter-  
769 mediaries, as happens in the case of the piache, since the  
775 shaman, or medicine man, is nothing more than an intermediary  
between society and the world of the spirits; his illumination  
is determined by the action of famous dead shamans who are  
reincarnated, one might say, in the living one and determine  
many of the actions of the community, especially those with  
reference to Illness and to Death. In other words, the shaman  
in his life is not guided by his own personality but rather by that  
of the shamans who have deigned to come down to him to  
indicate the functions that he must comply with, the rules that  
he must observe, and, in short, all the indispensable acts of his  
profession. The spiritual direction of the group is thus in the  
hands of the dead, who continue to look after their group in a  
more effective manner than when they were alive.

The gradation of status which we have seen in Guajiro so-  
ciety in previous paragraphs is also followed in the world of the  
dead, in which murderers, for example, occupy their same  
condition of outlaws, as also do suicides; they do not wander  
about freely as the other spirits do but are condemned to crawl  
face downward along the ground. And, if while in life they  
were a threat to the regimen for personal security or collective  
stability, they are also so after dying; from this develops the  
series of preventive practices relative to these spirits.

## XII

554 Status is susceptible to modifications both upward and down-  
558 ward. The causes of ascent are implicit in the conditions referred  
to, which as they are reached one by one confer on the indi-  
vidual an increase in his prestige, or keep it maintained.  
Among the sources of descent we can enumerate the following  
as the principal ones: a) the scarcity of male members for  
some reason or other in the clan unit or in the small family

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554 group, which implies in fact a lack of social backing. b) economic losses which prevent their maintaining their clan or  
558 family rank and, therefore, their individual prestige. c) the  
● breaking of the regimen for personal security and collective stability which implicitly carries /255/ with it the lowering of status, because when a group which has suffered considerable losses in number as well as in capital commits a punishable act against an individual of a superior clan, it becomes liable, not to the legal negotiation for indemnity but to extermination as a free unit, because the offended group, being superior, will not deal with the offenders on a legal basis. Furthermore, if the infraction wrongs a group weakened in its economy and in the number of its male members, the indemnity is not governed by legality but rests on the individual judgment of the powerful offender, in conflict with whom the offended one cannot put up sufficient coercive force to insist on an adequate indemnity.

671 This phenomenon is due to a clear and precise fact within  
627 the social mesh that holds the clans together in La Guajira:  
questions of law are applicable only when the clan groups who are challenging each other are equally equipped in economic strength and in fighting men. It is only then that the legal action of the arbitrators can be brought into play to negotiate an arrangement equitable to both sides. Law, therefore, is regulated by equality of strength. But once this equilibrium is broken, law no longer exists as an institution if it is contrary to the will of the /stronger/ injured side, which will impose the indemnity by means of its strength and according to its personal ambition, sacrificing the offender both socially and economically, or when the injury has been inflicted on a weaker group, allowing the aggressive action to go unpunished.

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177 in the direction of civilization, which [ 40 ] powerfully attracts  
+756 him. We can almost affirm that if the medical and hygienic  
services of La Guajira were intensified by the Colombian govern-  
ment, in the course of a few years the shaman would disappear  
as an institution in the peninsula, and the greater part of the  
aborigines' magic beliefs, especially with respect to sickness  
and death, would disappear from the collectivity and would  
remain only as folkloristic manifestations which recall his  
presence in times past.

+786 The decadence of this institution can be noted very easily  
● 558 if we look at what Uricoechea says in the introduction to the  
177 work already cited: "They always had their shamans, or curers,  
and diviners to consult and respect. The shamans had their  
schools in the woods, and they were legislators in addition to  
being doctors; furthermore, they were the priests and inter-  
preters of observances and beliefs which they, in common with  
all the inhabitants of America, had." (37) Compare what is

37. Celedón, Rafael. Op. cit.,  
Introduction, p. 20.

said in these paragraphs with all that we have stated, and you  
will note the enormous decrease in prestige that the shaman  
has suffered in La Guajira in the space of a few lustrums.

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III

### Magic and Sacrifice

782 In Guajiro culture we can distinguish four types of sacri-  
fices:

1. Those of a funeral ritual character.
2. Those of a harmful warlike character.
3. Those made to forestall the effects of dreams.
4. Those made to propitiate the protector spirit of  
the shamans.